

Message Text

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21

ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5863

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: CONTINUING CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT

REF: PANAMA 7605

1. THE RECENT CHANGE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOR SAW THE GOVERNOR OF CHIRIQUI PROVINCE, ARNULFO BOUTET, NAMED AS VICE MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL WELFARE. REPLACING HIM AS GOVERNOR WAS ROBERTO VEGA BERBEY, WHO ALSO RETAINS HIS POSITION AS DIRECTOR OF THE FRONTIER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION.

2. ON THE LOCAL LEVEL, THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES WERE THE DESIGNATION BY THE PANAMA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF DIOMEDES CONCEPCION AS MAYOR OF PANAMA CITY, AND JULIETA DE LORENZO AS DEPUTY MAYOR. PRIOR TO HIS APPOINTMENT AS MAYOR, CONCEPCION WAS DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S INSTITUTE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES. JULIETA DE LORENZO, A PANAMA CITY ATTORNEY, SERVED AS VICE MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY BEFORE HER SELECTION AS DEPUTY MAYOR. HER APPOINTMENT MARKS THE FIRST TIME THAT A WOMAN HAS HELD THIS POST.

3. COMMENT: CONCEPCION'S SELECTION AS MAYOR COMES AFTER AN APPARENTLY LACKLUSTER ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

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IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION. ON THE MINISTRY LEVEL,

THERE IS MUCH SPECULATION THAT THE NEXT CHANGE WILL BE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. CURRENT MINISTER, FERNANDO MANFREDO, IS WIDELY REPORTED TO HAVE ALREADY RE-SIGNED AND CLEANED OUT HIS DESK AT THE MINISTRY. THIS CHANGE MAY BE THE RESULT OF INCREASING LEFT WING CRITICISM OVER THE DEPARTURE OF ROLANDO MURGAS FROM THE MINISTRY OF LABOR, IN WHICH MANFREDO IS SAID TO HAVE PLAYED A CONSIDERABLE ROLE.
JORDEN

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